THE

RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. II. October 30, 1936 Heshvan 14, 5697 No. 13

EDITORIALS

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By Samuel Dinin

CORRESPONDENCE

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EDITORIALS

Poland's "Excess" Population

A STRANGE champion has recently entered the lists to battle in behalf of Jewry: the government of Poland. At the last meeting of the League of Nations, a representative of the Polish government pleaded for a special territory where large numbers of Polish Jews might settle. The Polish government is also anxious to facilitate a large scale emigration of Jews to Palestine, convinced as it is that emigration alone can alleviate the problem of its "excessively" large Jewish population. The Polish government therefore seeks assistance from the League in effecting what it believes to be the only solution of a distressing situation.

What should be our attitude toward these proposals of the Polish government? Certain leaders of Jewry, notably those identified with Jabotinsky's new Zionist Organization, have expressed their approval, and have offered their support. Considering the insufferable conditions under which Jews live at present in Poland, there is no question that emigration would be a source of genuine relief to many of them. Nevertheless, we feel that the Polish suggestion is vicious, and that it must be met with the uncompromising opposition of right-thinking Jews throughout the world.

The Polish government speaks of an excess Jewish population. Generally, a population is excessive for a given country because of inadequate economic resources in that country. If Poland is suffering from a lack of economic resources, her problem then is an excess of population generally, not of the Jewish population in particular. If that is so, let Poland plead for a territory in behalf of her excessive population *as a whole*. Why single out the Jews as the special candidates for emigration? The Polish representative had, of course, his reasons for so distinguishing the Jews. There is something peculiar about the Jews, he pointed out, which makes it difficult for them to adjust themselves to the economic realities of present-day Poland. Polish Jews have earned their living very largely as petty merchants, and their entire class is being displaced by the cooperatives. The question that should be asked of the Polish government is: Why not give the Jews employment in the cooperatives?

This question, as a matter of fact, is the crux of the entire matter. Government monopolies and cooperatives have absorbed an ever larger share of the economic life of Poland. All these newer enterprises are, however, closed to Jews. The displaced Jews thus become "excessive." It is a conception that is the direct concomitant of a ruthless anti-Semitism. That anti-Semitism we must resist for the sake of Jewish honor and Jewish security.

It is true that emigration is, at the present time, an important element in any pro-

gram of Jewish relief. But the facilitation of Jewish emigration must be the work of Jews themselves, or of friendly governments. Poland enters the lists with unclean hands. These gestures on her part of concern over Jewish welfare are the outgrowth of a policy that tries to degrade the Jew to secondary citizenship, and then to meet his disabilities by endeavoring to get rid of him. This we dare not sanction. The Jews are in Poland not by sufferance but by right, a right that is guaranteed to them by more than ten centuries of toil and struggle for themselves and their neighbors.

Fascism Must Be Anti-Semitic

WHEN the prophet Isaiah complained that there was none so blind as Israel, he referred of course to the Jew of his time. But his criticism can be levelled with equal accuracy and applicability against any number of Jews of our own day. For example, there are among us some who contend that fascism need not be anti-Semitic. They insist on regarding the official anti-Semitism in Germany as an unusual phenomenon characteristic of that land for special historical reasons, and not necessarily basic or intrinsic to the philosophy of fascism. This gallant attempt to clear fascism of the stain of anti-Semitism represents of course, in part, a wish-fulfillment. Those few Jews of much property and privilege who would benefit selfishly from fascism and who would therefore like to see it prevail throughout the world, try to ease their consciences by disclaiming that anti-Semitism is a necessary and inevitable concomitant of fascism.

To such Jewish apologists of fascism, however, several recent news dispatches from abroad have been most disturbing. General Franco, leader of the Spanish fascist army, has expressed dire predictions as to what his regime will do to the four thousand Jews of Spain. In England, Sir Oswald Mosley, who had originally denied that his fascist black shirt movement would be anti-Semitic, is now deliberately instigating riots in the East End section of London. And now Italy, long the only example of a fascist dictatorship that did not include anti-Semitism in its program, is beginning to show signs of an official anti-Semitic policy. For now, the *Regime Fascista,* official organ of the Italian Fascist Party, has launched anti-Semitic attacks against the Jews, who, be it noted, number in all less than fifty thousands in Italy. To be sure, there have been denials from Rome; nevertheless, the Jews of Italy have felt themselves constrained to dissociate themselves from the Jewries of other lands in an effort to prove the purity of their Italian loyalty. It may be argued that the anti-Semitism of the four fascist countries mentioned above does not yet prove that anti-Semitism is organic to fascism. Nevertheless we insist that anti-Semitism is implicit in fascism by its very nature and objective.

Every form of fascism tends towards anti-Semitism first because of its *technique.* Fascism arises to save a sick capitalism. When an economic order can no longer supply the necessities of life to its masses, these masses will seek to remake that order unless their intruments of power, i. e., their democratic institutions, are taken from them. If, then, those who sit in the seats of the mighty are, at a time of economic crisis, to prevent the expropriation of themselves, they must somehow or other induce the masses of people to surrender their political weapons and economic privileges. But people will not give up their rights and freedom merely for the asking. Anti-Semitism therefore serves as a bait to the fascist who is making his bid for power. Under the guise of agitation for the supression of the dangerous Jew he takes into his hands the control of the machinery of government. Thus does anti-Semitism offer itself as a quick political device or technique for any fascist who is preparing to seize power. And it serves equally well for the fascist who is already in power. Fascism solves none of the economic problems that call it into being. It must therefore, like capi-

talism generally, face recurrent periods of crises. In a democracy the party in power may be voted peacefully out of office, but under a fascist regime the leader has the bull by the horns and dare not let go. Whenever then a fascist system is faced with a crisis, its leadership, to save its neck will deflect the discontent of the masses in the direction of the Jews.

Every form of fascism tends towards anti-Semitism also because of its *psychological effects.* It is the purpose of fascism to keep the spirit of nationalism burning at white heat, to encourage chauvinism, and a sense of racial or national superiority. For only so can the expropriated and exploited masses be kept from a cool-headed evalution of how little is being premitted them of the good things of life. And whenever nationalism is in flame those who participate in the nationalist frenzy must despise, distrust and hate those who for one reason or another are not members of the in-group.

Fascism generates the spirit of anti-Semitism and race-hatred by its very *ideology.* For fascism says that the State is the end and goal of social process; that there can be no other gods before the national gods. Every secondary religious, cultural or national loyalty is a direct challenge to the fascist theory. As surely as Bismarck went into the *Kultur-Kampf* in the effort to turn the loyalty of German Catholics from their Church to the State, as surely as Hitler is attempting to suppress provincial loyalties in Germany and drive Christianity into oblivion, so surely must any theory of a society which sets up the State as the supreme arbiter or authority in the life of the people find the Jew, with his minority religious and cultural interests, intolerable.

Jews should be opposed to fascism not merely in self-interest. There are any number of reasons why Jews should resist fascism, as all human beings should, on human universal grounds. But for Jews there is a special reason for fighting fascism. It threatens them doubly—as men and as Jews.

A Horrible Example

JEWISH readers of the daily press were no doubt more than a little shocked to read during the course of the past summer that Dr. Frank Buchman, head of the so-called Oxford Group Movement, had put his personal *heksher* on Adolf Hitler. What Dr. Buchman said ran as follows: "I thank heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler, who built a front line defense against the anti-Christ of communism. . . . My barber in London told me Hitler saved all Europe from communism. That's how he felt. Of course, I don't condone everything the Nazis do. Anti-Semitism? Bad, naturally. I suppose Hitler sees a Karl Marx in every Jew. But think what it would mean to the world, if Hitler surrendered to the control of God. Or Mussolini. Or any dictator. Through such a man God could control a nation overnight and solve every last bewildering problem." It is to be observed that while Dr. Buchman's endorsement is not blanket in character, it does see fine potentialities in fascist dictatorship. And that alone is sufficient to make his statement an unpleasant surprise to those who are not accustomed to expect religion to endorse tyranny.

Jews as a whole know very little about the Oxford Group Movement, or Buchmanism, as it is sometimes called. They may have heard vaguely that it is a new species of the old Revivalism operating with a new technique, especially among the so-called upper classes.

It is well worth while to examine Buchmanism, not so much for what it is in itself as for the fact that it offers us a vivid illustration and a horrible example of the mistakes that can be made by a religion which lacks a social consciousness and a social program.

The Oxford Groups are informal societies which claim an unusual technique for man's salvation. Their doctrines are very simple. They believe in "listening to, accepting, relying on God's guidance."

For that reason each adherent of the movement allows itself "quiet hours" in which he waits for divine inspiration. Whatever guidance comes to him he then follows completely, "surrendering his life, past, present and future, into divine keeping." When one lives so, when he has made restitution for whatever wrongs he may have committed, he is regarded as "changed." So far Buchmanism is only another instance of the pietisms that have appeared in all religions and at all times. What is unusual about the Oxford Group is certain special elements in its technique. For the Buchmanites lay great stress on an institution which they call "sharing." They talk over their sins with one another, sometimes privately but also at informal convocations known as "house-parties." At such a house-party one may hear individuals confess to the Group every conceivable offense from the most trivial to the most serious. What is most peculiar about the Group is the fact that house-parties are held in the most expensive hotels and at the swankiest private estates. Indeed, the membership of the Oxford Group is made up, on the whole, of the 'best' people, the movement making an especial effort to enlist big names, those of old world titles and newer economic dynasties to give an air of distinction to the Group.

There are a number of objections to religion of this sort. It smacks, in the first place, of a kind of spiritual snobbery. Secondly, it lacks anything which approaches a theology, a reasoned theory, a rationale. When one asks questions such as, Does God really talk to man in quiet hours? How does He manifest Himself at those moments? How shall one conceive God?—To all these questions Buchmanism has no answer. Indeed, the Groupers boast of their leader that he "persists in his custom of refusing to argue about intellectual difficulties." In addition, the house-party confessional must of necessity encourage a distasteful exhibitionism. Furthermore, one cannot help but wonder whether the guidance which comes in such hours of meditation springs from God or from the not-altogether trustworthy subconscious.

But more basic than these objections is this consideration — Buchmanism has no message for society. It assumes that through its method it can get big and important men to be kindly disposed toward less important individuals and that thus the economic and political problems of our day will solve themselves. Perhaps Buchmanism avoids social issues, because it must avoid them if it is going to be popular with the classes to whom it caters. But even if we grant that it is not trimming its sails, the fact remains that any approach to social problems such as it indicates, is hopelessly naive. Human beings are made in no small measure by the social order in which they live. It is not enough to attempt to change individuals, if man is to be saved. The order which molds man must also be modified.

We are not talking now in terms of either-or. The regeneration of individuals is a praiseworthy task and one with which religion must concern itself. To be sure, the method of regeneration which Buchmanism offers strikes us as incredibly superficial and naive. But even if it were more mature, it would still be inadequate. From the Great Prophets onward the teachers of religion have insisted that the individual cannot be saved unless society is reconstructed also. The consequence of overlooking this truth is revealed in Dr. Buchman's tribute to Hitler. We offer our readers the leader of the Oxford Group as the horrible example of religion without social consciousness and without the recognition that the reconstruction of the individual, important as it is, is no substitute for the reconstruction of society.

Note On The Psychology of Religion

By David B. Klein*

I.

MOST people get their religion from their parents. The affection and respect toward parents are tied up with the religion they cherish. Their God, their bigotry and their "church" tend to be the God, the bigotry and the "church" of their children. I am speaking of general trends, and am not unmindful of exceptions and the phenomena of change and difference. All that I mean is that most Buddhists come from Buddhist homes, most Jews from Jewish homes, most Baptists from Baptist homes, and most Catholics from Catholic homes. (It might also be said that many Ethical Culturists come from Jewish homes, but that is another story.)

An obvious, but frequently ignored, result of this mingling of religious experiences with early home life is the marked potency which the symbols and ceremonies of the parents' religion have for their children. A symbol is anything which is a sign of something else. It is a substitute for that other thing; it "stands" for it. The flag symbolizes the country in its historico-governmental nature. John Bull, a mythical entity, symbolizes the spirit of Great Britain, just as Uncle Sam represents the good qualities of the United States. Trade marks symbolize firms and commodities, and so on.

Now, when we are dealing with objects that can be seen and handled it is fairly easy to symbolize them. The word "table" symbolizes the object in question, and we have little trouble in teaching the young child the relationship between the experienced table and its verbal symbol. But when it comes to emotions, ideals, and ways of behavior, teaching is not quite so easy. Consider the difficulty of making clear to a child what we mean by such words as "statesmanship," "justice," "reverence," and "courtesy." These words do not symbolize things or entities to which we can point and which the child can manipulate and examine at leisure. They refer to ways of behaving or feeling which we technicallly call "processes," to distinguish them from entities. All we can do is to point out situations in which they occur and, by linking up the particular verbal symbol with the process, trust that the child will grasp the meaning of the symbol. In this way, the child learns the meaning of abstractions like greediness, selfishness, kindness, and sportsmanship.

Symbols are thus a function of our past. Childhood recollections, wistful memories, and other emotional associations are particularly apt to cluster around religious symbols. As a consequence, their meaning for us tends to be private and individualistic. What may be a rich, inspiring, glorious ritual or prayer for one may be dull and meaningless for another whose past is not bound up with the symbols involved.

To be maximally effective, religious symbols should not deviate very much from the form in which they were originally experienced as constituents of satisfying ceremonies. When unduly modified, symbols may lose much of their emotional power. This is true even if the symbols still have the same literal meaning in the modified form. By way of illustration, contrast the phrase "the Lord is my Shepherd" with "the Supreme Being functions as my Protective Guardian"; or "Now I lay me down to sleep" with "I'm ready to turn in." Those who are accustomed to prayers in Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, or English may find the same service lacking in richness of appeal when heard in a dif-

*Professor of Psychology, University of Texas; author of "General Psychology," etc.

ferent tongue. To Jews a Mohammedan service may seem bizarre or crude, just as our service may seem to the Mohammedan. A given ritual lacks symbolic efficacy for the stranger because of the barrenness of associations. A High Mass which thrills a person with a Roman Catholic background may leave a devout Quaker or believing Taoist cold and unmoved. To the outsider, an Orthodox Jewish service may appear to be a bleak, meaningless jumble of unregulated sounds and acts, while to the Orthodox Jew it may be an exquisitely satisfying and profoundly significant experience.

Because of the way in which this ideational and emotional background is so intimately embedded in a myriad associations of home, parents, and family, it is unwise (unless other considerations render it necessary) to switch from one set of religious symbols or one type of ritual to a radically different one, and expect to retain the beauty, fervor, and richness of the old. This is the psychological justification for the retention of quaint prayers, age-old ceremonies, and time-hallowed musical forms.

Furthermore, assuming an equal degree of personal satisfyingness and ethical dignity in a series of religions, it is psychologically dubious for the adherents of any one to proselytize the others. The convert will be compelled to build up a new set of associations for the new symbols, and they may never function as spontaneously, as intimately, and as glowingly as they do for one "born" into the faith, so to speak.

II.

From this cursory analysis of the psychology of religious symbolism we can derive support for the ideal of religious tolerance. Additional support for this ideal is obtained when we reflect on one other psychological teaching, namely, the universality of individual differences. All along the line, when we examine and measure human traits, we find the fact of difference. People differ in height, in beauty, in education, in temperament and in intelligence. Of course, all are equal in the sense that they have some degree of height, character, knowledge, etc., but the nature and amount of each varies from person to person. All people respond to music of some kind, but not all respond to the same kind of music in the same way.

Such inveterate differences run through the warp and woof of mankind. May it not be, then, that the variety of sects, denominations, churches, mosques, temples and synagogues is merely a reflection of such differences of functioning in the field of religion? People may differ in their religious needs just as they differ in other respects. From this point of view, it might be just as fatuous to ask which is the "truest" religion as to inquire which is the "best," "truest," or "most satisfying" music—that of Beethoven, Bach, Gershwin, or Schubert?

Just as musical satisfactions differ in consequence of varying social traditions, training, and temperamental needs, so religious requirements may differ for similar complex reasons. Variety in ceremony, prayer and dogma may thus be an outgrowth of mankind's differences in the technique of obtaining solace and inspiration in religion. If this approach be sound, the hope for a uniform, standardized, universal religion may be both futile and unnecessary. It would be akin to hoping that all nations might eventually settle on a stereotyped form of music or a fixed type of painting, prose, or poetry.

The practical implications of this analysis should be grasped without difficulty: one should be as tolerant and respectful of alien religious practices as of foreign music, literature and language. The basic religious needs of people the world over may be similar, but the means of satisfying these needs may have to vary because of temperamental differences; hence differences of creed, ritual and church organization. But for any group to regard its

religion as having a monopoly on truth, beauty, and excellence is to ignore the fact of these psychological differences. All that may legitimately be asserted is that a group's religion is true for it and best in terms of its needs. To adopt any other position in the case of ethically enlightened, socially constructive religions is tantamount to emulating the ignorant chauvinism of the bigoted patriot who rants about the world-superiority of his country's language, food, art, climate, morals and fighting ability. Such a person seems to forget that recognition of excellence in others does not necessitate either self-abasement or loss of prestige. Of course, the neurotic, lacking confidence in his own cause and in his integrity and dignity may have to struggle to bolster up his waning self-respect by searching out and gloating over the defects of others; but his behavior should be recognized as unwholesome and symptomatic of failure.

III.

It may not be amiss to take up one additional feature of the general problem of symbolism and meaning. Attention has already been called to the difference between an entity and a process, and to the greater ease of symbolizing the first as opposed to the second. An interesting instance of this is to be found in the concept of God. The word *God* is a symbol that stands for something in the mind of the believer. What the content of this something is varies from culture to culture, from group to group, and even from person to person. To one it may represent mere superstitious nonsense; to another a glorified man directing the destinies of frail humanity; to a third a vague spirit or force responsible for creation; to a fourth the human impulses making for fellow-feeling, righteousness, and the good life; to a fifth the personification of natural laws.

From this viewpoint, as has been aptly said, man seems to make his god or gods in his own image. Some notion of the personality of a man may thus be obtained by learning about his conception of God. What the theologian designates as the attributes of God, the psychologist might describe as what man attributes to God. To a savage the concept of God involves far different content than to a cultured modern. In one sense, and a very personal and restricted sense at that, the attributes of God are identical with those ethico-social ideals of which people approve in their best moments. The man whose god is a tribal one, endorsing violence and bloodshed against rival tribes, will reflect such ethical insularity in his personal conduct. Contrariwise, the man whose god is endowed with the attribute of universal and impartial love for all his creatures will reflect this enlargement of ethical responsibility in his conduct. In this sense it is fair to say, "Tell me what your God is like, and I can tell you what you are like."

Furthermore, since in its more mature development the God-concept refers less and less to an entity, and more and more to processes making for righteous living, a psychological sanction for the Biblical abhorrence of idols, images, or any concrete, material symbol for God becomes apparent. The Tetragrammaton or ineffable name of God became the approved symbol for the Jews. Any other means of more primitive or material symbolization would have failed to carry the meaning of the developed God-concept. In the Prophets, the ethico-social urge implicit in the mature God-concept comes to the fore with ever-increasing force and vividness. From this standpoint, the doctrine that God is in us, without being in any special part of us, is rendered intelligible. After all, is not this what the theologians have termed the immanence of God? And does it not also suggest that the kind of God immanent within us is a product of our training, social heritage, ethical insight and active choices in the realm of values? Stated differently, this phase of the God-concept refers to the ideals we foster and the values we cherish.

It should now be evident why it is so

difficult to explain to a very young child what is meant by God and why we cannot show him the meaning of God in the way in which we can show him the meaning of symbols that stand for entities like ball, tree, or shoe. It requires more mental development than such a child possesses to realize that the world contains processes as well as entities, and that the former may be just as real as the latter even if they cannot be weighed or photographed or chemically analyzed.

That religion is a complex social phenomenon should be clear by this time. It should also be clear that religion goes far back into our cultural history. Tracing the primitive origins of religious cults and ceremonies has been the work of many investigators. Unfortunately, such investigations have not always been subjected to critical evaluation. There is a tendency to oversimplify the findings in the direction of striving for a *single* factor which will account for the rise of all religions. One writer may stress *fear* as the basic, primitive religious emotion; another may emphasize *sex*, and a third may underscore naive wonder and curiosity. Still others may call attention to the welter of magic and superstition characteristic of aboriginal religious rites. Now it cannot be denied that the history of religion is revelatory of a mass of such crude origins. Only the ignorant or intellectually blind can maintain that religion has invariably made for nobility of life and has never been tarnished by the brutal, the lustful, the selfish and the superstitious.

But after acknowledging all this, we must guard ourselves against two prevalent errors. One is that of taking only a single one of the complexity of factors and motives operative in religious origins, and elevating it to the status of sole or most important *cause* of religion. The other is a little more subtle. It consists in assuming that because the origin is crude, superstitious, and even lustful, these same factors must therefore still be prevalent in all modern religions. There is danger of loose thinking in this. It is equivalent to arguing that flowers cannot be beautiful and fragrant since they have their roots in mud and manure. Their origin being ugly and crude, what they develop into must be equally ugly and crude. The fallacy is obvious and one which the psychologist William James pointed out years ago. As he formulated it: "By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots."

It is well to bear this in mind when the dignity and beauty of a given ceremony are assailed because in the remote past it meant something neither dignified nor beautiful. Not what we or our ancestors have been, but what we and our descendants are and may become, should govern our evaluations. Despite its miniature and insignificant origin, the oak is both sturdy and a giant among trees. In terms of this analogy, it may be that by means of earnest thinking and devoted effort mankind may yet make religion—notwithstanding its sordid, magical, terror-stricken, neurotic, and even sexual origin, if you will—into an effective instrument to lift humanity to a level of conduct, befitting creatures who pride themselves both on their rationality and their worship of a God of justice, righteousness, and love.

Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?

By Samuel Dinin

A FEW months ago the world was startled by the announcement in Moscow of the proclamation of a new constitution for the people of the Soviet Union, which aimed to extend the right of suffrage to elements of the population hitherto deprived of such right, to broaden the base of representation and participation in government on more democratic lines, and to introduce many innovations characteristic more of democratic parliamentary governments than of one ruled by a dictatorship. Friends of the Soviet Union received this news calmly. They had known all along that Soviet Russia was the only real democratic country in the world, and this was only further proof of their own contentions. Those not so friendly to the Soviet Union at first heralded the news as a clear indication that dictatorship of the proletariat had failed, and that even Soviet Russia was turning to democracy. But after they had had time to digest the contents of the new constitution, they cried that the whole scheme was disingenuous. What matter, they said, the few parliamentary concessions given to the people by those in control? The basic relationships remain the same. The Russian people still will not have the freedom and the liberties that Americans have in their country; they still will not have real representative government. Stalin will still remain supreme, a dictator whose power becomes greater with each passing year. The shocking news emblazoned in the press of all the countries of the world all summer, of the trial and execution of sixteen of the conspirators accused of plotting the death of Stalin and of other Soviet leaders and of treason to the Soviet Union, only served to confirm the critics of the Soviet Union in their belief that Soviet Russia was still ruled by an iron dictatorship, that Stalin was mighty and relentless, and that the new constitution was an empty gesture and a hoax.

Is Soviet Russia a dictatorship or a democracy? The Webbs in their new book, or books* to be exact, unequivocally state, at the end of the first volume, that in their belief, Russia is not a dictatorship but a multiform democracy in which the Communist Party exercises a new kind of leadership, a type of democracy, however, which can in no way be identified with democracy as commonly defined. But having reached this conclusion, a conclusion which takes the Webbs over 400 pages to develop and unfold, they reject it as inadequate to describe the real essence of Soviet Communism. They feel that it is futile to attempt to fit Soviet Communism into any of the existing molds, or to define it by existing terms, for none of them quite covers the case of Soviet Russia. Russia is neither a dictatorship or a democracy; they conclude finally that it is a civilization, a new civilization which is bound to spread. And with that the Webbs proceed to describe in another volume the basic characteristics of this new civilization.

It must not be assumed from what has just been said that this new work by the Webbs concerns itself merely with the problem of dictatorship or democracy in the Soviet Union. It is, in fact, despite the coolness alleged to have been accorded it by Stalin himself, the most comprehensive single work on all phases of Soviet Communism and on life in the Soviet Union yet published, and is indispensable to any one interested in the U.S.S.R. It is in every sense monumental, and a fitting climax to the

*Soviet Communism: A New Civilization? By Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1936. Two volumes.

long and productive career of the Webbs. The arrangement of the chapters is so simple and so clever, that, though each chapter can stand authoritatively by itself, it forms part of a unitary plan, whose purpose is to reveal a particular aspect of a problem in terms of the larger issues involved, as the Webbs conceive them.

Thus the first volume is subtitled "The Constitution," and includes chapters on the Constitution as a whole, Man as a Citizen, Man as a Producer, Man as a Consumer, The Vocation of Leadership (the story of the Communist Party in action), and a final chapter on Dictatorships or Democracy. The second volume is subtitled "Social Trends in Soviet Communism," and includes chapters on The Liquidation of the Landlord and the Capitalist, Planned Production for Community Consumption, In Place of Profit, The Remaking of Man, Science the Salvation of Mankind, the Good Life, and an Epilogue, called A New Civilization? (the question mark is put there by the Webbs).

The book is thoroughly documented, and is written in a highly dispassionate, fair-minded, and scholarly manner. Although the Webbs completely espouse the cause of Soviet Communism, and describe the Russian experiment with undisguised relish, they do not flinch at pointing out what to them are definite shortcomings in the Soviet experiment. Thus, among other things, they mention as faults which should be corrected: (1) the disease of communist orthodoxy, (2) inadequate freedom of thought for intellectuals and scholars, (3) the relationship of Moscow to the Comintern, and (4) the highly disciplined concentration of authority. They speak out about these faults in no uncertain terms. With reference to the first point mentioned, they state unequivocally: (p. 999) "Those who erect the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin into a sort of 'Holy Writ', not to be questioned, correct or extended by any advance in the science of sociology, would do well to remember that they are thereby denying the validity of the very process of dialectical materialism; and reverting, indeed, to the doctrinal rigidity of the Orthodox Church." And with reference to the last point, they feel that concentration of authority such as exists in the Soviet Union, has its definite drawbacks, for it spreads fear among the intelligentsia, leads to a succession of accusations and counter-accusations, and denies to dissentient leaders freedom of organization.

It is obviously impossible to discuss with any adequacy the many interesting points raised by the Webbs in their colossal work. We shall have to limit ourselves, therefore, to a discussion of just three points: (1) the problem of the Jews in Soviet Russia, (2) the question of dictatorship or democracy, and (3) the conception of Soviet Communism as a new civilization.

1. The Problem of the Jews in Soviet Russia.

In the discussion of the Jews and other minorities in Soviet Russia, as in the discussion of many other problems, the Webbs try to be so fair to both sides that their conclusions cancel each other and the reader does not know in the end what to believe. They describe fairly accurately the position of the Jews in the Soviet Union. They feel that Soviet Russia alone has really solved the problem presented by the existence of the Jews, and of other minorities in a strongly centralized state, by the adoption of the policy of cultural autonomy, or, as they put it, "by the novel device of dissociating statehood from both nationality and race." They describe the richly variegated cultural life of the Jews and the other minorities, and they are ecstatic over the way Soviet Russia has helped the many nationalities within its borders to develop their cultures. But then they go on to show that despite this encouragement of cultural differentiation, Soviet Russia, like other federal states, is increasing the centralization of its authority and, by maintaining its unity unimpaired, is exerting a levelling influence on all the minority cultures. This levelling is ensured because of three factors:

(1) the cultural autonomy, though legally established, is still a matter of administrative practice; and the powers that be have the same authority in disallowance and cancellation over autonomous areas as over *oblasts, rayons,* etc.; (2) the economic relationships operate irrespectively of race or nationality and are thus a unifying factor; finally, (3) "the ubiquitous guidance and persuasion of the essentially unitary Communist Party, composed of members of every race and every distinctive culture in the U.S.S.R., ensures not only unity but also the centralization that is necessary." (p. 156). Yet despite the evidence which they themselves cite, the authors feel that this centralization and unification involve no lessening of the cultural autonomy of the minorities, but occur concomitantly with the strengthening of the various regional cultures. [With reference to the Jews, they do state, however, that "nevertheless, it cannot be denied that all the blessings of security from pogroms and freedom to enter professions that the U.S.S.R. accords to the Jews involve, in practice, their acceptance of the Soviet regime; and make, on the whole, for assimilation." (p. 153)]

The whole problem of what culture is is involved in the above discussion. If the content and the thought of a culture are pre-determined, and freedom is granted only to clothe this content with national forms, what kind of cultural autonomy is there? There is no doubt that Soviet Russia has stimulated and revived dozens of minority cultures and given them a new lease on life. The question is not, "What has been done?" but "What will it all lead to?" The Webbs themselves have analyzed the powerful factors working for cultural unification. The Russian solution of the problem of national minorities is held up as ideal. But if it too leads to ultimate assimilation, in what way can it be called real cultural autonomy, and a solution of the problem of cultural minorities?

2. Dictatorship or Democracy?

The whole discussion of whether the Soviet government is a dictatorship or a democracy ends also in a kind of stalemate, because the Webbs are forced to admit in the end the futility of applying dictionary, or ordinarily accepted, definitions of these terms to Soviet Russia. Thus in one place (p. 449) they conclude that "if by autocracy or dictatorship is meant government without prior discussion and debate, either by public opinion or in private session, the government of the U.S.S.R. is, in that sense, actually less of an autocracy or a dictatorship than many a parliamentary cabinet." Nor could they discover in all their examinations of the numerous councils and committees and commissions in the Soviet hierarchy, government by the will of a single person at any point, though they add significantly, "so far as the legally-constituted legislative, judicial and executive authorities of the state are concerned." On the contrary, their extensive study of the Russian constitution and of the immense and complicated administrative, legislative, and judicial system, lead only to sheer amazement at the extent and the degree to which the masses of Russians share and participate in public affairs and government. The only definition they could find which adequately describes the Russian Constitution was "a multiform democracy, organized on the basis of universal participation with democratic centralism; a constitutional form so loose as to be exceptionally mobile and, for that reason, endowed with an almost irresistible quality of expansiveness." (p. 422).

What puzzles and intrigues the Webbs, however, is the role of the Communist Party in the Soviet scheme of things. On the one hand they state that the "Party is outside the Constitution. Neither the Party nor its supreme body can, of *itself,* add to or alter the laws binding on the ordinary citizens or residents of the U.S.S.R. The Party can, by itself, do no more than issue directives,—that is, give instructions—to its *own members,* as to

the general lines in which they should exercise the powers, with which the law, or their lawful appointment to particular offices, has endowed them" (p. 430) and they go on to prove that Stalin is in no strict sense of the term a dictator, that he really takes orders from the Party, and is built up as a demi-god by the Party because it feels the masses need and want the worship of one person. On the other hand the Webbs quote the words of Stalin himself, "In the Soviet Union, in the land where the dictatorship of the proletariat is in force, *no important political or organizational problem is ever decided by our soviets and other mass organizations, without directions from our Party.* In this case, we may say that the dictatorship of the proletariat is, *substantially,* the dictatorship of the Party as the force which effectively guides the proletariat." (p. 370). The Webbs go on to describe in detail how the Communist Party cell in every factory and institution guides and influences the decisions of the particular body, and how in turn the supreme Politbureau controls and gives directions to all the cells in the Communist Party.

What the Webbs prove, then, is that though there is a vast amount of sharing by Soviet citizens along every line around which life in the Soviet Union is organiezd, this sharing is in the final analysis limited, and the really important decisions are made by a small clique in the Communist Party, which is an extra-legal body. To be sure this clique is guided by the criticisms and suggestions that well up from the thousands of subordinate bodies, and represents basically the popular choice of the intelligent leadership of the Soviet Union—the Communist Party. How powerfully entrenched this clique is, and how intolerant of any kind of deviation it is, was amply illustrated in the trial and execution of the sixteen this past summer. Such government cannot be called dictatorship, because dictatorship is defined as government by the will of a single person. Nor can it called oligarchic, or democratic, or described by any other term historically used to describe governments, because more of them exactly fit the categories mentioned.

No wonder the Webbs were finally forced to give up, and to seek some other term which would more aptly characterize Soviet Communism. They are constrained in the end to call the Communist Party a religious order, and Soviet Communism a new civilization.

3. Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?

In what sense is Soviet Communism a *new* civilization. The Webbs list the following as the primary aspects of contemporary civilization: (1) The Christian religion with its code of conduct; (2) the capitalist system of private ownership of property; (3) goverment based on the system of parliamentary democracy; and (4) an unprecedented increase, through knowledge, of man's command over nature, along with an increasing application of science to the amelioration of the poor. The outstanding characteristics of Soviet Communism, on the other hand, are: (1) The abolition of profit-making; (2) the planning of production for community consumption; (3) social equality and universalism (there is only one single social grade in the Soviet Union (—a producer by hand or brain); (4) a novel representative system based upon the principle of universal participation in public affairs, under the guidance of a highly organized leadership; (5) a novel vocation of leadership through the Communist Party—a voluntary but highly organized and strictly disciplined group which must subscribe to certain fundamental tenets; (6) the cult of science—the unswerving belief in knowledge itself as the main instrument of achievement; (7) anti-godism, and (8) the emergence of a communist conscience —"the recognition of a universal individual indebtedness balanced by an equal insistence on the fulfillment of its corporate obligation as a social institution by every group or organization."

The question arises first, as to whether

every one of the items listed by the Webbs as characteristic of Soviet Communism is really a new element, and secondly, whether all of the items listed must necessarily belong together or be contingent one upon the other. It is obvious, in answer to the first part of the question, that no civilization in history was ever created *de novo,* that every new civilization has been built up out of existing elements of the civilization of its day, and fused into a new unity and directed towards new purposes. If that is the case, then the answer to the second part of the question becomes apparent. It may be that certain aspects of Soviet Communism have been accidentally come by and tortuously joined with other aspects to form a new whole. For example, it might be asked whether anti-godism must inevitably follow from the first three premises, whether we cannot abolish profit-making and plan production for community consumption and gain social equality without predication of a universal anti-godism. Or it might be asked whether all the things that are deduced from dialectical materialism and are promulgated in its name, can, logically or scientifically, be deduced from it. But these questions, pertinent for us who are not in the Soviet Union, are almost superfluous in an attempt to understand Soviet Communism.

No civilization in history has ever achieved perfect unity, and fused all the elements of its life into a comprehensible whole. The important thing is that the Russians *believe* that they have a perfect unity, and are constantly and deliberately working towards a unification of communist civilization on the basis of set doctrines and principles. It does not matter whether the unity achieved is perfect, but whether in its effects it so acts upon the people and gives them a oneness of purpose.

And this unity the Webbs find in Soviet Communism. "The characteristics of Soviet Communism," they say (p. 1138), "exhibit a distinct unity, itself in striking contrast with the disunity of western civilization. The code of conduct based on service to the community in social equality, and in the maximum development of wealth and capacity in every individual, is in harmony with the exclusion of exploitation and the profit-making motive, and with the deliberate planning of production for community consumption, whilst both are in full accord with that universal participation in a multiform administration which characterizes the Soviet system. The economic and the political organizations, and with them the ethical code, are alike staked on a wholehearted reliance in the beneficial effect of making known to every citizen all that is known of the facts of the universe, including human nature itself; that is to say, in science as interpreted dialectically, to the exclusion of any miraculous supernaturalism or mystical faith in the persistence of personal life after death. The Worship of God is replaced by the Service of Man."

The civilizations in which we live, whether Jewish or Christian, are disunited and disjointed. The question for us is (granted that we too want to achieve the abolition of profit-making and the establishment of social equality, etc.) whether we can integrate these new elements into our own civilizations and achieve a new unity which will bring with it such devotion and sacrifice as the Russians have brought to the task of Soviet Communism. In the process of striving towards such a unity we shall have to find out whether the type of religion we stand for, the kind of government we have, the code of conduct we live by, are compatible with the basic ends we wish to achieve. The burden of proof is upon us.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Sirs:

Though I usually endorse your editorials, I cannot resist the urge to protest against the attitude expressed in your editorial, "Is God a Capitalist?"

You display the same defective vision so frequently found among communists, fascists and capitalists alike. All are color blind, but are affected by different hues: The capitalist finds golden shades soothing but reds give him a headache; browns, blacks, and blues are pleasant to a fascist but red makes him violent; while the communist is only satisfied by red and, strange to say, by gold when closely held by him, but not when it is beyond his reach.

Along with capitalists, fascists and religionists you fail to differentiate between communISM and communISTS. These terms are not synonymous. As I understand it, communism is a reasonable SYSTEM seeking to establish social justice by a new economic arrangement set up by a dictatorship of the proletariat. The communists, however, are the FORCE which seeks to establish this new order, but in doing so they have exceeded the boundaries of their economic, socialistic, and even political scheme and have ruthlessly and despotically attacked democracy and religion. It is the communists, not the capitalists, who have "identified God with the capitalist system and private property."

And now capitalism, accepting the challenge on the enlarged front, ignores its own economic sector, and is counter-attacking with the aid of its UNnatural allies, Democracy and Religion, on their two fronts! The counter-attack by the latter is often against communist despotism and atheism rather than against communism.

Let the communists abandon Leninism and Stalinism and stick to communism. Let them cease attacking and, instead, make peace with Democracy and Religion; they will soon find far less resistance to their propaganda,—and *you* will have no cause to denounce many of those who now condemn the communISTS.

The solution must be—a Leon Blum not a Leon Trotsky, another Cadman not a Coughlin, a "socially-minded, ethical" democracy not a soulless, mechanized autocracy.

Brooklyn, N. Y. SOL L. LEOPOLD

Sirs:

There can be little disagreement with your position in your last issue on the effect that a refashioning of America's economic system to conform with ideals of social justice will be more instrumental than anything else in eliminating anti-Semitism (that is, so far as that chronic historical affliction can be eliminated). Nor can there be much dispute with the proposition that in the present presidential campaign both the Republican and Democratic parties are engaging in a series of maneuvers to attract to their respective candidates the votes of Jews (as well as of Swedes, farmers, housewives and others).

But it is not so easy to justify your stand that there is little to choose between these two political parties in their attitude towards Jews. True, substantially similar generalities have been extruded by representatives of both parties. But *"lo ha-midrash 'ikar ela ha-ma-'aseh."* Regarding not the three short months of this campaign, but the three long years of this administration, it cannot be gainsaid that Jews have been accorded generous treatment and recognition by the present Democratic administration. Or perhaps, in view of the rather tenuous attachment of some of these Jews to their people and faith, it might be more accurate to say that this administration has not discriminated against able men because of their Jewish origin. Need repetition—*ad nauseam*—be made of, among others, the names of Morgenthau, Strauss, Cohen, Eekiel, Lilienthal? Whereas, *per contra,* in New York State, the active sponsorship of the pre-Republican Convention Landon campaign voluntarily undertaken by Albert Ottinger, was abruptly snatched out of his hand (surely not because he neglected to don Rabenu Tam's tefilin also). Nor has any Jew appeared in connection with the conduct of the Republican National Campaign since.

Apart from this matter of recognition of individuals, shall it not be accounted to him for righteousness that the President was of pivotal aid in the recent reversal of Great Britain's apparent intention to stop immigration to Palestine? And can we look with indifference on the indubitable connection between the Republican high command and America's Streicher—the infamous Coughlin?

It is all very well to strike a superior pose on your mountain peak in Darien, above the sordid realities of political campaigns, and cry aloud with Isaiah "... *uva'aru shenehem yahdav vëen mechabeh.*" It is all very well to fix one's eyes on a blue print of Utopia and disdain the conflict at hand. But when the facts, extending over three years and coming to a climax in this campaign, are as clear as they are, and when the results may involve the re-entrenchment in the seats of government of "big business" and the immediate introduction of, or at least preparation for, fascism in this country, it is decidedly not well for those of us who are so concerned with our people's welfare and who are in a position to exert influence upon them to fix their eyes upon the heavens and stumble into the snare underfoot. Only Moses could gaze aloft and win the battle down below. Those on the plains, and their leaders, were engaged in the realities of struggle. It is to be hoped that our masses will discern these realities and act accordingly.

New York, N. Y. D. I. KAP